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CHRISTIAN ART, MASCULINE CRISIS, AND THE THREAT OF JEWISH CONVERSION IN BERTHA PAPPENHEIM'S SHORT STORIES

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses a number of short stories by the Austrian-Jewish writer and feminist campaigner Bertha Pappenheim, showing how the author uses literary narratives to explore anxieties about the perceived threat of Jewish-Christian conversion at the beginning of the twentieth century. In a period of intense debate about the future of Jewish communities and identities within a rapidly modernising and secularising Christian majority culture, Pappenheim campaigned for the protection of Jewish orphans from aggressive missionaries, and for a feminist political and social practice that emerged from within Jewish traditions, rather than rejecting them. Literary narratives allowed her to explore areas of ambivalence and anxiety about this project. She chooses to do this through male protagonists, all of whom have artistic ambitions and experience moments of crisis and failure in encounters with Christian art; threats to Jewish identity are figured in terms of the aesthetic temptations of the embodied, sensual art of Christianity, which lead to decadence, isolation, and death. To set against this, Pappenheim proposes tentatively a mode of socially useful narrative, encoded as specifically Jewish, which offers the potential to preserve the tradition against the shocks of modernity.

In ihren Erzählungen thematisiert die österreichisch-jüdische Schriftstellerin und Frauenrechtlerin Bertha Pappenheim in den ersten Jahren des 20. Jahrhunderts ihre Ängste um die durch jüdisch-christliche Bekehrungen bedrohte jüdische Identität. Ausgehend von intensiv geführten Debatten über die Zukunft jüdischer Gemeinden in einer Zeit beschleunigter Modernisierung und Säkularisierung der christlichen Mehrheitskultur, bekämpfte Pappenheim aggressive Bekehrungsversuche christlicher Proselyten an jüdischen Waisenkindern und setzte sich für eine feministische politische und soziale Praxis ein, die an die jüdische Tradition anknüpfte, statt sie abzulehnen. In ihrem literarischen Schreiben konnte sie eigene Ambivalenzen und Ängste durcharbeiten: Ihre männlichen Protagonisten erleben das Scheitern ihrer künstlerischen Ambitionen in Krisen, die durch die Auseinandersetzung mit der christlichen Kunst ausgelöst werden. Die jüdische Identität wird durch die körperbetonte, sinnliche christliche Ästhetik in Versuchung gebracht und bedroht, was zu Dekadenz, Isolation und Tod führt. Dem setzt Pappenheim eine vorsichtige Lösung entgegen, nämlich eine als spezifisch jüdisch kodierte, gesellschaftlich verankerte narrative Kunst, die Möglichkeiten bietet, die Tradition in die Moderne hinüberzuretten.

Bertha Pappenheim (1859–1936) is better known as a feminist campaigner, social worker, translator of important religious works from the Yiddish tradition, and co-founder of the Jüdischer Frauenbund (1904) than as an author of literary works. Nevertheless, she wrote literary works – for the

most part shorter prose works, but also plays – throughout her career, none of which have attracted sustained critical attention. I will read three of the stories published in the collection *Kämpfe* in 1916 in order to show that literary writing permitted Pappenheim to explore areas of ambivalence and anxiety about her political project.¹ Specifically, the stories explore forms of artistic expression as threats to Jewish tradition and identity, with the feelings evoked by the aesthetic experience of beauty triggering the desire for religious conversion and the abandonment of rootedness in Jewish traditions and communities. In these stories, Pappenheim stages confrontations between her male Jewish protagonists and the temptations of modernity and art, exploring their contrasting responses and the potentially catastrophic consequences of their abandonment of tradition.

Where it is discussed at all, Pappenheim's literary writing tends to be read biographically, more precisely in terms of her analysis with Sigmund Freud and Josef Breuer. Since Ernest Jones established in 1953 that Pappenheim had been the patient to whom Freud and Breuer refer as Anna O. in *Studien über Hysterie* (1895), her contribution to the development of the 'talking cure' has been debated, and there has been significant controversy over the consequences of her analysis for her later life, work, and writing.² I do not intend here to contribute to this discussion, because a biographical interpretation of her stories – while certainly legitimate – seems to me to occlude other potentially more fruitful readings.

Inge Stefan discusses her stories in terms of the language of Jewish identity in modernity, which she reads in connection with Pappenheim's linguistic crisis in the analysis documented by Freud and Breuer. For Stefan, the stories show 'keine positive Perspektive, sondern reproduzieren in Variationen die immer gleiche aussichtslose Konstellation'. Pappenheim 'wiederholte [...] die traumatische Erfahrung einer Nicht-Identität, der Sprach- und Ortlosigkeit einer jüdischen Minderheit in einer ihnen feindlich gesonnenen Umgebung der Heimatlosigkeit'.³ Certainly, the stories deal with dilemmas and struggles, and they often end in melodramatic moments of tragedy, suicide, or murder. Reading the stories in terms of biographical trauma, or a more generalised sense of the experience of modernity as crisis and trauma, produces an interpretation in terms of aporia and hopelessness, but this is a circular argument, and

¹ Bertha Pappenheim, *Kämpfe: Sechs Erzählungen*, Frankfurt a. M. 1916; I will refer to the texts collected in Bertha Pappenheim (Anna O.), *Literarische und publizistische Texte*, ed. Lena Kugler and Albrecht Koschorke, Vienna 2002. Orthography as in the original.

² See Robert Kaplan, 'O Anna: Being Bertha Pappenheim – Historiography and Biography', *Australasian Psychiatry*, 12 (2004), 62–8; Inge Stefan, "Die eigentliche Entdeckerin der Psychoanalyse?" Bertha Pappenheim alias Anna O., in *Die Gründerinnen der Psychoanalyse. Eine Entmythologisierung Sigmund Freuds in zwölf Frauenportraits*, ed. Inge Stefan, Stuttgart 1992, pp. 39–60.

³ Inge Stefan, 'Sprache, Sprechen und Übersetzen: Überlegungen zu Bertha Pappenheim und ihrem Erzählungsband *Kämpfe* (1916)', in *Sprache und Identität im Judentum*, ed. Karl E. Grözinger, Wiesbaden 1998, pp. 20–42 (p. 42).

perhaps underestimates the aesthetic autonomy of texts that are literary rather than directly political. In order to seek another perspective on these stories, I am going to read them in the context of debate about Jewish–Christian conversion and Jewish masculinities in the period in question, and show how Pappenheim explores these issues with reference to theories about Jewish and Christian art.

Pappenheim's stories concentrate on exploring negative examples and feelings of ambivalence and anxiety about failure. They feature male protagonists negotiating the perilous consequences of modernity and the breaking of traditions, internalising the tensions into individual psychological dramas that tear her protagonists apart: most of her figures are isolated and lack the flexible rootedness to survive. Her male protagonists lack the balance provided by strong maternal influence alongside the paternal traditions of cultural inheritance. They are thus vulnerable to the temptations of Catholicism and Christian aesthetics, and descend into egotism or decadence.

The stories work through their issues by reflecting on questions of aesthetics, setting up a clear distinction between 'Jewish' and 'Christian' approaches to art: they are about the eroticism of image-making, the temptations of beauty, and the supposed inability of Jewish artists to separate the representation from the object represented. Kalman Bland has suggested that the idea of Jewish 'aniconism' – resistance to, or incapacity for visual representation – is an 'unmistakably modern idea' that arose amongst Jewish thinkers in the nineteenth century who were trying to negotiate the threats and opportunities of modernity while defining and maintaining identity boundaries by creatively reinterpreting traditions.⁴ European-Jewish intellectuals had an investment in defining Judaism as a rational, ethical, and elevated religion of abstract, universal principles, rather than as a set of cultural, communal practices, and ritualistic actions: this means accepting a Christian definition of Judaism as 'a religion' while rejecting Christian and Enlightenment dismissals of Judaism as particularist and backward-looking.⁵

Pappenheim's stories provide a commentary on the idea of Jewish aniconism, interpreting Christian figurative art – as well as Christian music, with its overt appeal to the concrete sensual experience of the body – as a threat to Jewish identity. They convey a stark message about the consequences of Jewish artists adopting Christian modes of art; although Pappenheim's didacticism can at times lead her to moments of melodrama, these literary narratives allow her to explore states of ambivalence and psychological conflict, and to focus on understanding failure while leaving her reader to consider potential alternatives.

⁴ Kalman P. Bland, *The Artless Jew: Medieval and Modern Affirmations and Denials of the Visual*, Princeton, NJ 2000, p. 8.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

THE THREAT OF CONVERSION

Pappenheim's stories are interventions in a wide-ranging and intense debate about Jewish to Christian conversion: as a threat to Jewish life and identity, or as an opportunity to participate fully in modernity. In fact, the absolute numbers of converts were small: only 0.5% of German Jews converted in the period between 1871 and 1918.⁶ Nevertheless, the anxiety and sense of threat was real, and the focus was often on female converts, given the role of women as curators of tradition in Orthodox communities; this despite the fact that female converts were the exception in the nineteenth century (only 7% of converts were women in the years 1873–82). The proportion of female converts rose in the early twentieth century (to 37% by 1908) as communities changed and employment opportunities increased, meaning that women were more often confronted with antisemitic employment practices and attitudes in the workplace.⁷ Pressures on Jewish women – to support and pass on traditions while negotiating the dilemmas presented by emancipation, intermarriage, and modern challenges to community cohesion – were intense, and Pappenheim addresses these issues in her campaigning, but literary writing about Jewish masculinity seems to allow her space to explore anxiety, ambivalence, and the consequences of failure.

Pappenheim's stories contribute to an ongoing debate about Jewish identity under the conditions of modernity that had gained new intensity at the turn of the century. Texts by Jewish writers such as Jakob Fromer or Adolf Weissler, with their calls for Jews to abandon their religious and cultural identities and to take their place in the mainstream of German culture, had provoked responses from across the political spectrum, from Jewish and non-Jewish voices. Weissler, writing under the pseudonym Benedictus Levita, had published a piece in the *Preußische Jahrbücher* in 1900 calling for Jewish parents not to pass on their 'backwardness' to their children but to ensure that they are baptised so that they can contribute to the reform of Christianity ('Unsere Kinder werden Christen!').⁸ Insistence on Jewish difference has led to the experience of isolation from the mainstream and to the internalisation of stereotypes, as well as to manifestations of degeneration. Jews are encouraged to express their patriotism and reject damaging traditions.

⁶ Christian Wiese, "Erlösung des Judentums"? Debatten über "Judentaufen" und die Konversion zum liberalen Protestantismus in Deutschland vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg', in *Treten Sie ein! Treten Sie aus! Warum Menschen ihre Religion wechseln*, ed. Regina Laudage-Kleeberg and Hannes Sulzenbacher, Berlin 2012, pp. 204–17 (p. 206).

⁷ Britta Konz, 'Gender and Conversion: Bertha Pappenheim's Struggle against Assimilation and Baptism', in *Cultures of Conversions*, ed. Jan Bremmer, Wout J. van Bekkum, and Arie Molendijk, Leuven 2006, pp. 95–110 (p. 95).

⁸ Benedictus Levita, 'Die Erlösung des Judenthums', *Preußische Jahrbücher*, 102 (1900), 131–40 (140).

Weissler picks up on stereotypes of darkness, ugliness, and disorder associated with Jewish worship and culture, contrasting them with the beauty of Christian music or the lights on the Christmas tree. Literary works of the time are replete with such images of the Jew entering the warmth and light of Christian or secular community from the darkness of tradition: one might think of the story 'Der Weihnachtsabend des Rebb Abramowitsch' (1893) by Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, in which a Jew lost in the winter weather is welcomed into a family home at Christmas, or the protagonist Friedrich in Ernst Toller's play *Die Wandlung* (1919), whose expressionist journey begins with the longings awoken by the sight of his neighbour's decorated tree, or the child Artur Aronymus in Else Lasker-Schüler's play *Artur Aronymus und seine Väter* (1932), who is tempted by the beauty and warmth of a Christian household. These clichés are not simply illustrations of a political argument but go to the heart of a debate about conversion framed in aesthetic and erotic, rather than intellectual, terms.

In her discussion of literary depictions of Jewish-Christian marriage in the nineteenth century, Eva Lezzi has described how the literary discourses of love, marriage, inheritance, and sexuality construct differences between Christians and Jews 'gerade auch dann, wenn diese Alterität im Begehren zugleich überwunden werden soll'.⁹ So the difference is created within the structures of desire that aim to erase it: 'Begehrensstrukturen, die ihrerseits nicht nur dazu dienen, Distanz zu überbrücken, sondern diese paradoxerweise überhaupt erst herzustellen.'¹⁰ Lezzi argues that the aesthetic attraction of conversion in literary accounts – the seductiveness of Christian art, music, and ritual – are a way of sublimating the erotic; I would argue, however, that in Pappenheim's work at least, the erotic is a field on which deeper anxieties about conversion, loss, isolation, and disappearance can be played out and negotiated.¹¹ I will return to this point below.

Jakob Fromer gives a drastic portrait of the supposedly degenerate state of Jews in modernity, a description that could apply to the male figures in Pappenheim's stories.¹² Having cut themselves off from their roots and religion, 'modern' Jews struggle to maintain an identity that turns out to be senseless and empty, and attracts only the disdain of their Christian compatriots; the substitution of bourgeois social norms for Jewish religious practice and tradition and what Fromer sees as the reduction of faith to questions of universal ethics in Reform Judaism is little more than a weak accommodation to the demands of the majority culture.

Fromer's 'solution' is radical assimilation and the willed disappearance of Jews and 'Judentum' within a few generations. This is not an uncommon

⁹ Eva Lezzi, 'Liebe ist meine Religion!' *Eros und Ehe zwischen Juden und Christen in der Literatur des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Göttingen 2013, p. 8.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

¹² See Jakob Fromer, *Das Wesen des Judentums*, Berlin 1905; Jakob Fromer, *Vom Ghetto zur modernen Kultur: Eine Lebensgeschichte*, Charlottenburg 1906.

view in a period of intense debate about the 'Jewish problem', and Pappenheim's feminist reformulation of Jewish religious and charitable practices appears to be a complex response to this debate. She steers a difficult course, rejecting both liberal assimilationism and the Zionist attack on it, and preserving the vital elements of religious faith, identity, and practice while criticising the position of women within Orthodox communities. Most importantly, though, she seeks to formulate a feminist theory and practice from within Jewish tradition, rather than accepting Christian and secular views of Jewish 'backwardness'.

Pappenheim's work sits uneasily within the models of emancipation and reform that were being debated amongst feminist activists at the turn of the century, though it bears a relationship to the theories of 'organisierte Mütterlichkeit' promoted by the activists of the Bund für Mutterschutz, especially in the notion that women's innate 'motherliness' can be mobilised in public social and charitable action and political agitation. Through the Jüdischer Frauenbund, Pappenheim practised what she considered to be specifically female and Jewish forms of social activism, religious reform, and community building: 'Weibliche Selbsthilfe, geistige Mütterlichkeit, jüdische Ethik'.¹³

Britta Konz has referred to Pappenheim's 'weiblich-jüdisches Projekt der Moderne', which involved strengthening the tradition against external and internal threats by renewing it through women's political, community, and religious engagement.¹⁴ This entails rescuing from obscurity and condescension female Jewish traditions of active, community-focussed piety and service, which are very different from the domestic ideal of the bourgeois models to which many liberal Jews aspired. Nevertheless, in her stories, Pappenheim depicts failure, isolation, and defeat, exploring the consequences of a modernity that has opened up and destroyed communities, leaving her protagonists isolated and weak.

In this article, I am concerned with specific questions of aesthetics, conversion, and masculine identity in Pappenheim's literary works. In her stories, she seems to accept the diagnosis of Jewish masculine weakness, decadence, and isolation in modernity that one finds in the work of assimilationists such as Fromer as well as Zionists like Max Nordau. However, she rejects their solutions, whether it be the project of conforming to secular bourgeois gender norms or Nordau's idealisation of the hard, labouring, soldierly Jewish male body ('Muskeljudentum'). Jewish men who break with their traditions are isolated and weak, bearing all the hallmarks of *fin-de-siècle* nervous disorders and identity crises; Christian-secular society offers them no place or healthy role. Pappenheim's positive

¹³ Britta Konz, *Bertha Pappenheim (1859–1936): Ein Leben für jüdische Tradition und weibliche Emanzipation*, Frankfurt a. M. 2005, p. 367.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 264.

male figure is the gentle, family- and community-minded Orthodox rabbi, but even here there are traces of irony in his portrayal, as I will show.

Daniel Boyarin has written illuminatingly on the gender politics of Jewish emancipation, employing ideas that allow us to read Pappenheim's male protagonists as explorations of anxieties around emancipation and acculturation. For Boyarin, the stereotype of the effeminate Jewish man – a commonplace of antisemitic discourse – is not simply a product of hostile imposition. There are traditional forms of gendered self-representation that possessed high status in Eastern European communities: a 'mode of conscious alternative gendering', asserting cultural independence against the ways in which European bourgeois societies were encoding clear gender boundaries along the oppositions of public vs private, active vs passive, secular activity vs domestic piety.¹⁵

A specific formation of Jewish masculinity – the pale, physically passive, and gentle but intellectually demanding Talmud student (the *yeshiva bochur*) – which had been invested with high status as an object of desire, comes to be interpreted in bourgeois, secular terms as effeminate and weak, thus feeding antisemitic prejudice and adding to the dilemmas of emancipation: 'It was the process of "Emancipation" of the late nineteenth century that produced both the pain and the difficulty of Jewish (male) identity', because it was an identity on others' terms.¹⁶ Boyarin suggests that Pappenheim 'empowered herself by reclaiming the "deviant"' – that is deviant from the bourgeois heterosexual ideal – 'gendering of traditional Jewish women as her own' and putting it to use in her political struggle.¹⁷ This reclaiming of positive models of femininity also entails reflecting on the consequences for masculinities of her creative excavation of alternative Jewish identities: she chooses to do this in her literary writing.

'EIN SCHWÄCHLING'

The story 'Ein Schwächling'¹⁸ narrates the failed conversion journey of the artist Gabriel. The son of a widowed Talmud scholar, Reb Mordechai, Gabriel encounters the temptations of conversion and Christian art in conversations with his neighbour – also a widower – and his daughter Magdalena. This is the beginning of a journey that will lead him to a break with his father, conversion to Catholicism and marriage to Magdalena, a successful career as a painter of religious works, but ultimately to a feeling of betrayal and failure, culminating in suicide. The title suggests

¹⁵ Daniel Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man*, Berkeley, CA 1997, p. 3.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

¹⁸ Bertha Pappenheim, 'Ein Schwächling', in *Literarische und publizistische Texte*, ed. Kugler and Koschorke (note 1), pp. 183–213. Further references in the text as *ES*.

a story about a 'weakling' unable to cope with the conflicting demands of modernity on Jewish masculinity. Reading it in these terms might lead us to pass over the text as a didactic melodrama of little interest, but if we look closer and read against the grain of the programmatic title, we find a strikingly ambiguous exploration of anxiety about Jewish and Christian identities, maternal and paternal influences, and a potentially fatal clash of aesthetic sensibilities.

Gabriel's father, Reb Mordechai, is described at the beginning of the text in stereotypical terms as a black-clad figure struggling to carry a pile of books home through the cold weather. We might think of him as representing the figure of the Jew in a hostile modernity, clinging to the old ways at all costs. When his new Christian neighbours move into the Judengasse, it is as if he does not recognise the street any more: it has been transformed by the presence of people bringing artworks and musical instruments. Pappenheim's narrative is focalised on Mordechai at the beginning ('Sollte er sich nach den langen Jahren, die er hier wohnte, noch geirrt haben?' *ES*, p. 183), but the free indirect discourse needs to be broken on occasion to give cultural information about the accoutrements of a Jewish home: for example, the *mezuzah* on the doorpost (*ES*, p. 183) or the *mizrach* showing the direction of prayer (*ES*, p. 185). The perceived need to provide ethnographic information while preserving the perspective of her Orthodox Jewish figure produces an uncomfortable sense of both closeness and distance; even these small details tell us much about the difficulty of Pappenheim's political and religious project.

Mordechai's ideal is the verbal activity of Talmud study, 'mit lauter Stimme einen Satz der Schrift zu lesen, Fragen einzuschalten, zu kommentieren, zu zitieren, sich selbst zu widerlegen, – kurz jene große, komplizierte Gedankenarbeit [...], die von den jüdischen Gelehrten mit "lernen" bezeichnet wird' (*ES*, p. 185). The story seems to be working with the cliché of the dry, pedantic Talmud scholar that was a feature of antisemitic caricature, and the attitude of the narrative soon shifts from ambivalence to irony. Mordechai possesses no visual images apart from portraits of himself and his late wife. The portrait of his wife shows her as a beautiful young woman, 'träumerisch und traurig' like her son, while the portrait of Reb Mordechai has undergone constant retouching as he has aged:

Dieses Bild war ein wenig befremdlich anzuschauen, denn man hatte das gelungene Werk des Malers nach Jahren korrigiert, indem man dem jungen Mann im Bilde das Käppchen, das das Original immer trug, und die mittlerweile in seinem Bart ergrauten Haare nachträglich, um die Ähnlichkeit zu erneuern, aufgepinselt hatte. (*ES*, pp. 185–6)

The 'ageing' of Reb Mordechai's picture indicates a suspicion of even this kind of image: the image must represent the object as closely as possible,

and images should have no life beyond their relationship to the person depicted. In other words, they have to be controlled. But the image of the mother in her youth and beauty remains as a reminder of loss, and of the father's one-sidedly authoritarian, 'masculine' approach to raising his son. The lack of maternal influence on the boy makes him vulnerable to seduction away from the dry intellectualism of Reb Mordechai.

The young Gabriel is fascinated by the new, strange people; watching them arrive through the window, he is surprised by his father's homecoming, 'wie aus Sinnen erwachend'. Dreamily, he begins to use Romantic similes to describe the weather: 'Ich sah erst zu, wie der Hausrat da unten abgeladen wurde, und als dann die Sonne wie eine rote Kugel hinter dem Kirchturm verschwand –' (*ES*, p. 84).

This metaphor, trivial as it is, associates the arrival of the Christians with the discovery of figurative language: words do not just have to embody ideas, but can represent an object in different ways. The arrival of the Christians has loosened the bond between word and object, sign and referent, that the father's Talmud study – as presented by Pappenheim – tries desperately to defend. The liberation of language from its referent stands for a moment of traumatic separation of the Jewish individual from the collective tradition: Christian art is a response to this that offers healing by accepting the individual into another (erotic, aesthetically beautiful, maternal) collective, but this is fatal for Gabriel. The moment of his encounter with the neighbours is the beginning of his decadence.

This moment of traumatic separation is also the moment when the narrator abandons Mordechai's perspective and takes up the story's main protagonist, Gabriel. Significantly, we are given a description of the boy's sickly appearance at a moment when Mordechai is distracted by reading, as if we are being told things that are beyond that father's perception: 'Während [Mordechai] in den Büchern blätterte, blickte Gabriel still auf die ihm gegenüber hängenden Bilder. Das Licht fiel grell auf das Antlitz des Knaben. Seine zarte, schwächliche Gestalt entsprach kaum seinem Alter von fünfzehn Jahren; doch das ausdrucksvolle Gesicht mit den dunklen Augen hätte auf ein reiferes Alter schließen lassen' (*ES*, p. 185).

The narrative shifts to Gabriel's viewpoint, but the perspective is still not always clear. His first contact with the Christian neighbours is associated clearly with his absent mother. He is thinking of her when he hears Magdalena's father playing the harmonium: 'Still saß er da, blickte nach dem Bilde seiner Mutter und fühlte sich recht einsam. Da plötzlich hörte er Töne' (*ES*, p. 186). Gabriel sneaks out of the father's flat and stands on the threshold of the neighbours' doorway: a symbolic moment of moving from Jewish into Christian space. Magdalena is singing the 'Ave Maria', and the maternal associations bring him to tears; she comforts him and leads him into her home. Anticipating his conversion as an adult, this shows the Jew as able to leave his tradition, but needing to be brought into the Christian fold through acts of compassion. The statement, 'so hätte sicher seine Mutter zu

ihm gesprochen, wenn sie ihr Kind in Tränen gefunden hätte' (*ES*, p. 186), seems to confirm the equation of the maternal with Christianity.

It is, however, hard to pin down the focus of this sentence: if it is a reflection of Gabriel's thoughts, then how does he know this, since he never knew his mother? It is an ideal of motherhood created in the spaces left by the real mother's absence. If it is a narratorial commentary, as the words 'ihr Kind' seem to suggest, then it is more sympathetic to the child. Should we condemn the child as a 'Schwächling', or understand the field of tension in which he finds himself? These moments of uncertainty tell us much about the unresolvable tensions inherent in Pappenheim's political project: do Jews have the freedom to define their own identities if they are not 'weaklings', or does the situation they find themselves in make this impossible?

Magdalena has a 'glockenreine Stimme' (*ES*, p. 186), and Gabriel experiences her family home with its abundance of art, light, and music as sensory overload. The church that Gabriel enters at his lowest point later in the story, having learnt of the death of his father, is also full of music and visual spectacle. At this point, the text employs images linking him to the Wandering Jew (*ES*, p. 199), and conversion is offered as relief for his loneliness (*ES*, p. 200).

When Gabriel's father discovers that his son has been talking to his Christian neighbours and has started to draw, thus making forbidden images, he sends him away as an apprentice to a Jewish merchant, though Gabriel soon runs away. During this apprenticeship, Gabriel learns of the death of his father; the crisis produced by his death leads him into the arms of the Catholic Church, where he finds solace, taking the baptismal name Johannes.

His encounter with the mother-substitute offered by the Christian family allows Gabriel to distance himself from the paternal influence, and to question the prohibition of images. As he proceeds through his career as an artist, Gabriel moves deeper into his encounter with aesthetic procedures that distance him from his roots. He takes a job as a designer of monograms, combinations of letters that stand for an individual in an abstract way: the letters are now signs for something absent, rather than embodiments of meaning and presence (*ES*, p. 197). His acceptance of the split between sign and referent allows him to appreciate Christian art, and his encounters with art – as with the Church – are described in terms of a world of colour, forms, sounds, and sensuality opening up for him: his conversion has enabled his artistic creativity and his marriage to Magdalena.

Gabriel becomes a painter of religious and historical motifs; his best known work is a painting of the triumph of the Roman Emperor Titus over the rebellious Jews. Walking through a gallery of Christian art, Gabriel meets Magdalena again, whom he marries and with whom he has a child. During the child's difficult birth, Gabriel promises to make an offering to

God if Magdalena and the baby survive, and he sets about painting a scene of the birth of Christ.

The achievement of fullness is only temporary, however, and he is not fully at home in this Christian world. His child with Magdalena appears to take after Reb Mordechai in his appearance, and the couple talk about him in deeply troubling language, discussing his 'Jewish' appearance in terms of ugliness: 'Sind wir nicht froh, Johannes, dass wir das Kind haben, frisch und gesund, mag es auch vielleicht – weniger hübsch sein' (*ES*, p. 204). Thus, the child presents an aesthetic problem, his Jewish legacy not permitting the full resolution offered by Catholicism, which operates by the repression of its own Jewish origins.

Pappenheim employs the language of ethnic difference in describing the child, as she does when Gabriel, under the baptismal name Johannes, meets Klara, a Jewish woman with whom he begins a secret intimate friendship: 'Wie in ihrer äußeren Erscheinung, der zarten Blondine und der derberen, rundlichen Brünnette, waren die beiden Frauen auch in ihrer Innerlichkeit typisch für die Verschiedenheit des Stammes, dem sie entsprossen.' Klara is not beautiful, but has a quick intelligence that contrasts with Magdalena's instinct for 'das Formschöne' (*ES*, p. 208). The family have not converted, but Klara's siblings have stereotypically Wagnerian names – Siegfried and Elsa – indicating the family's surface assimilation to Christian-German culture. Klara's family offer another possibility, adopting the outward signs of assimilation while preserving a Jewish essence. The children's constant questioning of their religion, which is gently mocked by Gabriel and Klara, nevertheless, indicates a positive legacy of the kind of linguistic truth-seeking that characterised Reb Mordechai's 'lernen' (*ES*, p. 207).

Gabriel's relationship with Magdalena deteriorates because of the secrecy, and he finds he cannot work on the painting depicting Christ's birth. The crisis comes through a coincidence and revelation. Klara sees a reproduction of Gabriel's painting of the Triumph of Titus, *Der Triumphzug des Titus*, and shows it to her father, who recognises in the features of one of the Jewish figures an old teacher of his: Reb Mordechai. Klara reveals that her father talked about this teacher and his suffering at the hands of a renegade, apostate son, stating that she could not love such a weak-willed scoundrel. Gabriel reveals his identity to her and leaves her. Returning home, he shuts himself away in his studio and takes poison, leaving a note for his wife explaining that he cannot live with the dishonesty of his art and his own failure.

Der Triumphzug des Titus embodies his ambivalence towards his own origins. A depiction of a moment of historic defeat for Jews at the hands of imperial Rome exposes the power relationships at work in the triumph of Catholicism over Jewish ways of thinking, being, and worshipping. Gabriel's conversion is here exposed as one event in a longer history of defeat: it is not a purely individual matter, and is not a question of free choice between equal alternatives, as the Christian view of 'conversion' might suggest. The

pictorial representation contains its own contradiction, however, in the presence of a likeness of Reb Mordechai in one of the Jewish prisoners, whose expression, as Klara reports, captures his agony at the apostasy of his son: Gabriel has painted his own rejection of his father, but in order to do this, he must preserve the father's image as a disturbing presence (*ES*, p. 210). An image of the founding trauma of the Jewish diaspora also contains his family trauma, while exposing his repressed connection to the line of Jewish inheritance.

This story, despite its melodramatic plotting and overtly didactic tone, is interesting for several reasons. It presents a failure of Jewish masculinity to cope with the challenges of modernity and sets out a view of Christian and Jewish art that Pappenheim explores further in other stories: the threats to Jewish identity in the temptations of conversion are connected clearly with the incompatibility of Jewish and Christian aesthetic sensibilities. Catholicism represents a synthesis of erotic and aesthetic attractions for Gabriel, and the Church occupies the space left by his dead mother: an unassimilated early trauma that explains why he cannot complete his painting that features the Mother of God. Jewish conversion is represented here as fraudulent and a sign of weakness and decadence.

Gabriel falls into deception and inner conflict, and is unable to complete the picture that would have concluded his complete absorption into the world of Christian aesthetics and feeling. The conflict between Jewish tradition and Christian modernity is irreconcilable: the narrative clearly lays the blame on his weakness of character, but we are entitled to wonder what alternatives are on offer. The fact that a 'Schwächling' fails may mean that a stronger individual may succeed: Pappenheim has to lay the blame on Gabriel's character in order to leave open the possibility of other solutions.

'DER ERLÖSER'

The story 'Der Erlöser'¹⁹ similarly makes clear that the weak character of the protagonists is to blame for their failure to maintain their grasp on Jewish identity in the face of the multiple threats of Christian modernity. The story, set in London and Paris, concerns two Jewish orphans, Wolf and Reisle, as they negotiate their identity conflicts between tradition and modernity, acculturation, and Zionism. Wolf Wasserschierling, the central figure, arrives in London with his Russian-Jewish family, fleeing pogroms. His father leaves for America, promising to fetch his family later, but is never heard from again. His mother works herself to death, coming down with a sickness that kills her and her other children; Wolf is the only survivor. Homeless in the East End of London, Wolf is approached by a

¹⁹ Bertha Pappenheim, 'Der Erlöser', in *Literarische und publizistische Texte*, ed. Kugler and Koschorke (note 1), pp. 214–42. Further references in the text as *DE*.

respectable-seeming Jewish convert, Herr Newman, who runs a Christian mission house; lured by the promise of food, work, and English lessons, Wolf accepts his invitation to enter the mission. On the first night, the sight of a crucifix hanging on the wall of his bedroom brings back traumatic memories of the pogrom and the cross carried by the *pogromchiks*, and he flees in panic.

Homeless again, Wolf earns money with odd jobs in the criminal underworld, and spends time observing the mission house and wondering about the Jews that he sees who go in and out. One of them is the orphan Reisle, who is preparing for baptism, where she will become Mareia; she works for an old Jewish woman known as Muhme Rifke, a fence and – as it turns out – pimp. Wolf resolves to save Reisle both from conversion and from Rifke: he will be her ‘Erlöser’. He offers to work for Rifke one day per week if she promises to stop beating Reisle, and meets Reisle after school to persuade her of the absurdity of Christian beliefs in the incarnation of Christ.

The narrative springs forward here several years. Wolf is now a sculptor, working in Paris; he has attended the Zionist congress in Basel, but claims not to be a Zionist himself. The narrative does not make clear which conference is meant, though the fact that Wolf hears Theodor Herzl speak means that the story cannot be set later than 1903, the year before Herzl died. Wolf is sculpting a monumental head of Herzl, though he is never able to finish it. Through a friend, the Jewish journalist Martin Gerschowitz, Wolf encounters Reisle again, now known as Marie; she is still working for Rifke, ostensibly in a junk shop, but the narrative hints strongly that Rifke is also her pimp.

Wolf resolves again to rescue her, offering to get her training as a respectable housekeeper and getting her to sit as model for a sculpture to be called *Das erwachende Israel*. In this way, he hopes to help her rediscover her inner goodness and connection to her Jewish roots. When Wolf confesses to Martin that he wants to marry Reisle, Martin tells him to go the junk shop at night, where he discovers Reisle and Rifke entertaining clients in a back room. The story ends in a moment worthy of a stage melodrama, when Wolf jumps out of hiding with knife drawn and stabs Reisle in a perverse attempt to save her (‘Es war erfüllt. Er musste ihr Erlöser sein’, *DE*, p. 242).

The story works through a related set of ideas to those found in ‘Ein Schwächling’, presenting the threat of conversion as arising from Christian aesthetics and corrupt sexuality. Here, the male protagonist does not convert, but fails in his attempt to save Reisle by providing an effective defence of Jewish identity. The story sets out its stall clearly at the beginning, with a lengthy discussion of the dangerous activities of the Christian mission houses in London, which exploit Jewish poverty and

weakness of character in order to make converts (*DE*, p. 216).²⁰ Most of those who convert are 'keine guten jüdischen Elemente' who want to make profit from their conversion (*DE*, p. 215). The houses display the motto 'Friede sei mit dir' over their doors in Hebrew and Latin script (*DE*, p. 215), the motto suggesting a Christian ideal of peace as the absorption of the Jews into the Christian collective. The narrator passes explicit judgement on the differences between the faiths, suggesting that the idea of the incarnation of Christ is a comfort for weaker minds:

Für manche Menschen, die nicht stark genug sind, das Gute um des Guten willen zu tun oder die nicht von der rein geistigen Gottesidee der jüdischen Lehre durchdrungen sind, hat der Gedanke, das Gute einem Dritten – Christus – zuliebe zu tun, eine große tragende Kraft. (*DE*, p. 215)

As in 'Ein Schwächling', Pappenheim's narrator makes a clear distinction between the purity and elevation of Jewish teaching and the Christian idea of the embodied divine, which is a source of a dangerous attraction for Jews, especially those cut off from the wellsprings of Jewish tradition in the family. The tempter here is Herr Newman, whose speaking name reflects how he has anglicised and Christianised himself: Newman understands Wolf's hybrid of English and Yiddish, leading Wolf to understand that he is a converted Jew, 'trotzdem das rasierte Gesicht, Rock, Weste und Kragen ihm einen befremdlichen Eindruck machten' (*DE*, p. 218). The temptation consists in the offer of food and shelter alongside beauty: Newman's description of the New Testament stresses its aesthetic merits: 'Es gibt noch eine Fortsetzung des Testaments, die Erfüllung dessen, was die Propheten verheißen, die ist noch schöner als das alte Testament' (*DE*, p. 218). Reisle has been tempted by the possibility of taking a more beautiful name when she is baptised: 'Mareia ist viel schöner als Reisle' (*DE*, p. 224).

Christian art also contains a threat, in this case the threat of violence: the crucified Christ in his room reminds Wolf of the cross that the Russian Christians erected during the pogrom that his family escaped:

Zuhause war es, in Russland, an dem Tage, da die Christen das Häuschen zerschossen hatten, in dem die Eltern wohnten – da hatten sie auf der Straße auch so ein Kreuz aufgerichtet. 'Das ist der Gott der Christen,' hatte die Mutter gesagt und hatte ihre Hand auf die Augen des Knaben gelegt, während sie zitternd aus einem Kellerloch sahen, wie Juden in der Straße gemartert und getötet wurden. (*DE*, p. 221)

²⁰ See Agnieszka Jagodzińska, 'Reformers, Missionaries, and Converts: Interactions Between the London Society and Jews in Warsaw in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century', in *Converts of Conviction: Faith and Scepticism in Nineteenth Century European Jewish Society*, ed. David B. Ruderman, Berlin 2017, pp. 9–25.

This is a complex situation. The repressed memory of the pogrom is associated in Wolf's mind with the embodied God on the cross, and with a moment in which a Jewish father sacrifices himself to save his son: an act that contrasts with the disappearance of Wolf's own father, which led to the death of his mother. Significantly, it is also associated with his mother covering his eyes: the mechanism of repression of the image of the cross and the violent scene of trauma is associated with his mother preventing him from seeing in order to protect him. The re-emergence of the primal scene of trauma is too much for Wolf. Unlike Gabriel in 'Ein Schwächling', whom the break with his father leads to seek a substitute mother in the Church, Wolf comes to associate Christianity with violence, death, and sexuality in a way that he is unable to control.

The narrative perspective of Pappenheim's story is unstable. It begins with an essayistic critique of Christian missionary activity in London, but the positioning of the narrator becomes harder to pin down: Wolf's rejection of conversion is clearly justified on the level of Pappenheim's political critique of the missionaries, but it is never clear whether the text justifies his paternalistic and ultimately murderous attitude towards Reisle because of her betrayal of her history and her corruption, or whether the extremity of Wolf's reaction is to be seen as a symptom of an unresolved trauma. Wolf's desire to 'save' Reisle is ambiguously associated with his burgeoning prepubescent attraction to her, as she begins to take on the mannerisms of a Christian girl, no longer wearing a headscarf, braiding her hair, and losing 'Jewish' traits: 'Ihre Art sich zu bewegen, wurde ruhiger, die ganze kräftige ursprüngliche Frechheit war verloren gegangen. Das gefiel Wolf; denn er wusste, dass seine Mutter diese Unarten an den eigenen und an fremden Kindern immer sehr gerügt hatte, und er wusste auch, dass die Kinder in der jüdischen Freischule nicht so schnell, so glatt und sauber und hübsch wurden' (*DE*, pp. 224–5).

Reisle is losing stereotypical traits like 'jüdische Frechheit' and nervousness, and Wolf finds her Christian transformation attractive. But the nature of his attraction is also associated with gaining his mother's approval: we learn here that his mother also had ambitions for her children to leave behind these 'Jewish' features, perhaps for the sake of getting on in the world, or to protect them from violence. So his attraction for Reisle is tied up in a complex of feelings, and his sexual desire pulls in a different direction to his desire to return her to the Jewish faith, perhaps indicating a sense of shame at his impure thoughts and a desire to cleanse himself by raising the object of his desire to a level of incorporeal abstraction. Thus, Wolf's insistence on the purity of the Jewish faith is not to be taken at face value as a simple statement of Pappenheim's own view: it is associated with early trauma and shame.

A key moment in the story comes at the end of the first part, when Wolf resolves to become Reisle's 'Erlöser'. Reisle has begun to internalise the Christian idea of suffering as a route to purification through the

mortification of the body: she sees her mistreatment at the hands of Rifke as meaningful suffering rather than injustice (*DE*, p. 226). Wolf tries to 'save' her in two ways, through argument against Christian teaching and financial support to take her away from Rifke's influence.

He uses an aesthetic argument to dismiss the Christian idea of the incarnation, and to show that it leads to idolatry. He takes some clay and makes a small model of Christ on the cross, demonstrating the skill that will lead to his artistic success. The narrator comments that both children were 'in der tiefsten Tiefe ihrer Seele erregt' (*DE*, p. 227), without interpreting these profound feelings: there is a sense that vital feelings connected with identity, faith, and sexuality are being negotiated here without the children being able to articulate them. As soon as it is finished, Wolf destroys it again, reversing the act of creation and reducing it to 'eine formlose Masse – ein Lehmklümpchen': 'Sieh, Reisle, vor diesem Bilde, das ich eben mit meinen Händen geformt, willst du beten? So kann ich noch hunderte machen. Welches ist dann der Gottessohn? [...] Das kann kein Gott sein und kein Ebenbild des lebendigen, unsichtbaren Gottes, zu dem wir beten können in unserer Not' (*DE*, p. 227).

Wolf cannot accept the validity of any claim that the body signifies something beyond itself: the idea of the incarnation is a blasphemy connected in Wolf's mind with Christian violence against the Jews. This inability to accept that a body in art can be more than one thing at a time – both a physical presence and a sign for something else – and that a base human body can signify something abstract and pure, is at the root of the act of violence perpetrated by Wolf at the close of the story.

Reisle has no difficulty accepting this: her willingness to accept financial support from Wolf in return for sitting as his model while also working as a prostitute shows that she has accepted a standard role for female models in bohemian artistic circles. She is happy to pose for his sculpture without this signifying any inner commitment or desire for purification or moral betterment. Wolf hopes that the experience of sitting for *Das erwachende Israel* (*DE*, p. 238) will have a salutary effect on her, awakening a dormant feeling for morality and tradition, as he cannot accept the idea of the body in art as a simple signifier. Reisle has no difficulty with this: she can both sit as a representation of an idea and look forward to being recognised by the public as the model (*DE*, p. 229).

Since Wolf cannot separate her body from what it represents, then the revelation of her prostitution is a catastrophe: if her body does not incarnate at least the striving for purity, then it must be corrupt. We are left to try to understand the violence of his reaction. Has he discovered that his own desire for purity has been corrupted by his desire for Reisle, leading him to project his self-disgust outwards onto Reisle (by contrast with Gabriel's suicide in 'Ein Schwächling')? Has he come to see Reisle as an idol that he has to destroy for the sake of the purity of the tradition, as he did the clay crucifix? Or is he living out the unassimilated trauma of the

pogrom, lashing out at a female figure associated with the mother who had helped him repress the memory?

The melodrama of the close of the story provides a shock effect in the sudden release of repressed feeling, without resolving any of the questions the text raises. Pappenheim's narrative perspective becomes more ambiguous as the story proceeds from the confident, essayistic opening to the final line, whose focalisation is indeterminate: 'Es war erfüllt. Er musste ihr Erlöser sein' (*DE*, p. 242). It is unclear whether the story validates Wolf's actions or critiques them, and whether it supports his condemnation of her prostitution as moral corruption.

Reading this story alongside 'Ein Schwächling', we can see Pappenheim exploring similar ideas from different perspectives. Both stories are ambiguous, working through anxieties about the 'Jewish project of modernity' in ways that are less confident and more questioning than in Pappenheim's campaigning. The two male Jewish artists, Gabriel and Wolf, fail in their attempts to navigate a course between tradition and modernity and Jewish and Christian notions of art. In both stories, conversion is a threat to the psyche of the Jewish characters, and Christian modernity is an unwelcoming space for them to occupy. However, the attractions of conversion, figured as erotic, aesthetic, and maternal in varying degrees, are too much for these figures who have no community and tradition to fall back on.

'DER WUNDERRABBI'

On the face of it, the story 'Der Wunderrabbi'²¹ seems to represent another example of Jewish failure in modernity. This is how Inge Stefan reads it, viewing it in the same light as the other stories in the collection.²² However, I am going to read it against the grain of the other stories, suggesting that it offers – despite a sly irony – a potential alternative view of Jewish creativity to set against the artistic failures of the other stories. The story is set in Dobricz (presumably to be identified with the town Dobrich, in current Bulgaria, though this is not made explicit). The Jewish community of the town has been led for generations by the sons of one family, passing on the title of Dobriczer Rav from one generation to the next; the story opens as the community buries the current Rav, Reb Nochem, who had a reputation for divinely inspired wisdom, and is waiting for his son, Reb Wolf, to take over the title.

Wolf confesses to his wife, Gewiera, that he feels unworthy of his father's succession, as he does not feel any kind of divine inspiration. During his father's long illness, he has been acting as his mouthpiece, passing on his

²¹ Bertha Pappenheim, 'Der Wunderrabbi', in *Literarische und publizistische Texte*, ed. Kugler and Koschorke (note 1), pp. 243–57. Further references in the text as *DW*.

²² Stefan, 'Sprache, Sprechen und Übersetzen' (note 3), p. 37.

judgements to those who come seeking wisdom. Reb Nochem eventually became so weak that Wolf could not understand his voice, so he has been putting on an elaborate performance of leaning over his father, pretending to listen, and passing on his own views instead. He is beginning to feel that he may have to break the paternal line that goes back generations.

On top of this, Arjeh, the only surviving son of Wolf and Gewiera, has come down with mysterious symptoms of melancholy. He reads late into the night and has become pale and withdrawn. Arjeh is caught by Wolf reading the poetry of Heine, which has awoken longings within him that have been making him ill; Heine features here as the epitome of the sickness and isolation that wait for Jews who abandon their traditions. He confesses to his father that he has discovered a cache of books in German hidden in an old couch that Reb Nochem had bought second-hand: he has taught himself to read German and has become obsessed with Heine's poetry, and no longer feels any desire to attend the Beit Hamidrash synagogue to study.

Appalled, Wolf and Gewiera debate what to do in this situation that seems to threaten the life of the community, as well as their own livelihood. Eventually, Wolf sends Arjeh and Gewiera to Vienna to seek treatment: there is a professor in Vienna (*DW*, p. 256) who may be able to help. It is then revealed that Wolf as a young man had read this cache of books himself – as well as Heine, it contains Schiller, Voltaire, Spinoza, Rousseau, and Goethe's *Faust* (*DW*, p. 254) – and had fallen under their influence. In a moment of decisiveness, he burns the books and dedicates himself again to study and to the service of the community. The local Jews have been waiting for him to take on his father's role, and he now does so, in the knowledge of the sacrifice he has made in cutting himself off from modern, enlightened scholarship, and accepting that he will continue to give his guidance without the feeling of divine inspiration for which he had longed: 'Die Dobriczer Juden waren glücklich, weil sie wussten, dass sie wieder ihren Wunderrabbi hatten' (*DW*, p. 258).

We should note first that the title of the story, 'Der Wunderrabbi', is a common German translation for the honorific form of address Admor (abbreviated from *Adonainu*, *Morainu*, *VeRabbeinu*, our master, our teacher, and our rabbi), given to the scholarly leader of an Orthodox community. Unlike the original term, the German suggests a miracle-working figure, rather than a scholar, permitting the reader to take up a critical, satirical attitude towards the community that believes in non-existent divine guidance; Reb Wolf, however, fulfils the role of the Admor in a more pragmatic, scholarly way, despite his lack of direct inspiration. Thus, the title contains different potential views of the central figure, reflecting the satirical intention of the story.

The text negotiates questions of truth and fiction, and the needs of the individual against those of the community, and the question of whether it is justified that the community continues to support Reb Wolf on the basis of a deception is left open, as is the question of whether it is a deception at

all, rather than a convenient, shared fiction that allows Wolf to continue to provide the community with a vital service.

By contrast with the other stories, Pappenheim provides here a positive description of the community of Dobricz and the work of the Dobriczer Rav through the generations:

Aus reifer Beobachtung und Kenntnis des menschlichen Herzens, seinem Sehnen und Fehlen wussten 'die Dobriczer', gleich anderen jüdischen Volksberatern ihrer Art im Lande, in kluger Fragestellung die schwere, ungelenke, sowie die absichtlich zurückhaltende Zunge ihrer Besucher zu lösen, verstanden wirre Darstellungen zu klären, zerrissene Zusammenhänge zu verknüpfen, neue herzustellen und alle Vorkommnisse menschlich verstanden auf der Basis der reinen Gotteslehre zu lebendigem Leben zu erklären und zu gestalten. (*DW*, p. 243)

The contrast with Reb Mordechai in 'Ein Schwächling' could not be clearer: this is a living tradition of learning applied in a shared social context, rather than the lonely, hermetic pursuit of truth. We also find a contrast here in the perspective of the narrator: a key difference between the texts. It is clear where the story's sympathies lie: Reb Wolf is providing an important, humane service with the tools that he has inherited from his father and from the tradition.

As a result, the story's irony is clearer, and more satirical, placing this text in the familiar genre of critical German-language Jewish 'shtetl' writing in the tradition of Leopold Kompert or Karl Emil Franzos. The extended description of the community, with its varied shops and bustling street life, serves to orient the reader towards this genre: the emphasis in Pappenheim's description on the colourful signs in front of the shops, which 'verrieten auch dem stadtfremden Analphabeten, wo bei eintretender Nacht [d.h. nach dem Schabbes] der Geschäftsbetrieb dieser Gasse wieder einsetzen würde' (*DW*, p. 247), shows that this community works with a clear, legible, pragmatic, and agreed sign system, rather than the ambiguous, uncertain symbols of the previous stories.

Pappenheim's narrator makes a clear distinction between the Rav's blending of deep learning and practical understanding of the human heart and the hopes of the people of Dobricz, who are convinced that the words of their rabbi are 'Eingebung und Äußerung eines höheren Wissens und Willens [...] und dass ihnen darum unbedingt Erfüllung folgen müsse' (*DW*, p. 243). Thus, the community sees the Rav as a divinely inspired prophet, while the narrator's description of his work suggests something more like an experienced counsellor: we may be able to read this as a description of an idealised therapeutic encounter.

There is a satirical irony in the description of the community's idolisation of the Rav; it is clear that the community itself is responsible for creating the idealised image, and that it polices any doubters: 'Wenn je ein Zweifler leise auch von Enttäuschungen zu sprechen wagte, dann wusste der Volksmund

aus des Zweiflers eigener Unwürdigkeit und Sündigkeit das Fehlschlagen von Erwartungen zu erklären' (*DW*, p. 245). At the funeral of Reb Nochem, with which the story opens, the mourners discuss the deceased's life and qualities, constructing an image of him in terms of an ideal of masculine authority:

Tatsache war nur, dass sich niemand des Rebben anders erinnerte, als einer hohen, gebieterischen Greisengestalt, deren Haupt von einer Fülle weißer Haare bedeckt war. Sein langer silberiger Bart hatte bis an den Gürtel gereicht und ein blasses Gesicht umrahmt. Schläfenlocken, fast so lang wie der Bart, waren zu beiden Seiten herabgerieselt und unter buschigen, stark vortretenden Brauen hatten die blauen Augen geschimmert, die einem 'die Neschome, die Seele umklammerten', wie Cheskel Sofer, der Thoraschreiber, den Ausdruck fand. (*DW*, p. 244)

'Blass' is a key word here, establishing Reb Nochem as an embodiment of the scholarly Jewish masculine ideal described by Daniel Boyarin; the paleness of the child Arjeh, which his parents interpret as a sign of sickness without making the connection to Reb Nochem that the reader is encouraged to make, places him in this tradition too. Reb Wolf, when he discovers Arjeh reading Heine, connects his paleness with the child's mother instead: '[Arjehs] blasses Gesicht zeigte Ähnlichkeit mit der Mutter, die dunklen Augen hielt er eifrig auf ein kleines Buch geheftet und seine Lippen sprachen im Tone naiver Verzücktheit deutsche Verse' (*DW*, p. 253).

Wolf clearly sees the child's decadence in terms of maternal influence, to add to the hints that Arjeh may inherit features from his grandfather. Thus, the idea of clear lines of influence on either the maternal or paternal line is blurred. Given that the absence of the maternal influence was one of the sources of catastrophe in 'Ein Schwächling', one can find in the constellation of family inheritance in 'Der Wunderrabbi' a potential for something more positive, though troubling for the protagonists: a form of Jewish masculine gender identity that does not rely on the strict binaries of the secular world.

Arjeh is reading aloud the first two stanzas of Heine's poem 'Aus alten Märchen winkt es':

Aus alten Märchen winkt es
Hervor mit weißer Hand,
Da singt es und da klingt es
Von einem Zauberland.

Wo große Blumen schmachten
Im goldnen Abendlicht
Und zärtlich sich betrachten
Mit bräutlichem Gesicht –

He is interrupted by his father before he can reach the end, where the dream is dispelled by the sun 'wie eitel Schaum'; although at the level of the story's action, his father's intervention brings Arjeh back to reality, it in fact leaves him in the middle of the poem, at a key moment of gender indeterminacy and unresolved desire, without allowing him to reach the resolution himself. Thus, Wolf's fatalistic gesture of burning the books in order to stave off the dangers of conversion may instead simply serve to keep Arjeh in this stage of indeterminacy, without the tools to reach a resolution himself. Wolf also kills this possibility in himself for the sake of preserving the paternal line and its significance for the community. The family's proposed solution, for Gewiera to accompany Arjeh to seek treatment with the professor in Vienna, suggests that an encounter with the outside world may be a risk worth taking. We can certainly read this as a cheeky reference to Pappenheim's own analysis with Freud, but it is not clear what the consequences of this treatment will be for the child.

The narrative twist at the end of the story, when Wolf assumes the title of Dobriczer Rav and takes the place of his father, shows Wolf emerging from the crisis of the preceding pages and re-engaging with the expectations of the community. On the surface, this seems like a simple act of dishonesty and exploitation of the naive townsfolk, who expect a figure of masculine authority inspired by higher wisdom, rather than a man of troubled gender identity and very human intelligence. But there is another possible reading: the combination of scholarship, linguistic dexterity, practical wisdom, careful questioning, and sympathetic listening that Wolf has learnt from his father can be seen as a form of Jewish creativity to set against the otherworldly, irrational, and threatening Christian aesthetic forms with their false resolutions that lead Pappenheim's other protagonists to disaster.

In 'Der Wunderrabbi', Pappenheim continues her exploration of masculine Jewish identities under the conditions of modernity, but unlike the other stories I have discussed with their fatal conclusions, this is a story about the reconstruction of narrative after crisis. The moment of deception at the heart of Wolf's return to the community can be read as a commentary on writing and authorship: the artist, with his inherited gender ambivalence and tendency to walk a fine line between truthfulness and fiction, can find a role within his community that is not defined in Christian or secular terms. The ambivalence and psychological conflict that this entails have to be borne, as there is no resolution that is not false and ultimately fatal, but the tension is also a source of practical, worldly creativity and the renewal of tradition.

CONCLUSION

Reb Wolf's acceptance of his own role in the community, won only at great cost in an impossible situation, presents an ambivalently positive alternative to the catastrophes that befall the protagonists in 'Ein Schwächling' and 'Der Erlöser'. There is no return to the past, but, as the other stories show, the secular present is not hospitable to Jewish identity (or perhaps in this case, Jewish masculinity), so desperate but creative measures are necessary. No compromise appears to be possible with Christian art forms, which offer nothing but decadence for the male Jewish artist: the ambiguous sensuality of Christian aesthetics is contrasted with the verbal art of Jewish study and worldly wisdom. The strict dichotomy that Pappenheim constructs between 'Christian' and 'Jewish' art reflects a specific form of Jewish self-positioning within a modernity that makes impossible demands of Jews, forcing them to justify their continued presence and difference. The only character able to live within this field of tension is the one who makes no effort to accommodate himself to the Christian-secular world, practising instead a precarious creativity drawing on Jewish traditions. Even this comes at a cost, but Pappenheim leaves open the possibility of a creative, pragmatic, community-minded, 'soft' masculinity to set against the 'Muskelfudentum' of early Zionist thinkers and the hostility of the Christian world.